

# Le Paysan

Bulletin de liaison de la CNOP-Congo

Edition spéciale

**Editorial :**

## Cnop-Congo: Championing Agroecology and Climate Action to Empower Agricultural Producers

September and October 2024 marked a new milestone in the commitment of the National Coordination of Farmers and Agricultural Producers Organizations of Congo (CNOP-Congo) to agroecology and climate resilience. Through various initiatives, CNOP-Congo has demonstrated its role as a spearhead in supporting agricultural producers towards more sustainable practices that are adapted to environmental challenges.

A training session on advocacy for agroecological techniques was organized in Brazzaville for the benefit of local and national agricultural producers. It focused on advocacy techniques for soil fertility management, biological pest control, water management, and biodiversity conservation.

In October, a workshop to validate the five-year program entitled "Initiative for Biodiversity and Agroecology in the Congo Basin (COCBAI)" brought together experts, policymakers, and representatives of producer organizations to discuss and amend the project document.

These initiatives demonstrate CNOP-Congo's commitment to addressing the critical challenges facing Congolese farmers. By promoting agroecology, CNOP-Congo contributes to: Improving the productivity and quality of agricultural production while reducing the use of chemical inputs; Strengthening the resilience of agricultural systems to climate change and natural hazards; Preserving biodiversity and ecosystems; Improving producers' incomes through higher quality products and new market opportunities. By supporting agricultural producers in their transition to agroecology, CNOP-Congo is not only protecting the environment but also contributing to strengthening the country's food security and improving the living conditions of rural populations.

The commitment of CNOP-Congo is all the more commendable as it takes place in a context marked by the effects of climate change and pressure on natural resources. The activities carried out by the organization demonstrate that agroecology is a promising path to reconcile economic development and environmental protection. It is essential that these initiatives continue and intensify in the coming years. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen partnerships between CNOP-Congo, public authorities, civil society organizations, and donors. Together, we can make Congo a model in sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Séraphin Médard NTADY, President of CNOP-Congo

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# Training as the key to preserving agroecology and biodiversity conservation in Congo



*A view of the training participants*

**September marked a significant milestone in the promotion of agroecology in Congo with the organization of a large-scale training by the National Coordination of Farmers and Agricultural Producers Organizations of Congo (CNOP-Congo) in partnership with the Regional Platform of Farmers' Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC).**

This initiative, held in Brazzaville, brought together rural leaders from the capital city and departments across the country. Participants received in-depth training on advocacy strategies to promote agroecology. They acquired the necessary tools to influence public policies and promote more sustainable agricultural practices. Agriculture, if poorly managed, can pose a threat to biodiversity. Therefore, promoting agroecology, a sustainable agricultural approach that synergizes agricultural production and environmental preservation, is essential.

Agroecology today is much more than just a farming method. It is a comprehensive approach aimed at producing healthy and abundant food while preserving the environment and improving the living conditions of farmers. By adopting nature-friendly agricultural practices, such as crop rotation, biological pest control, and the use of green manure, farmers contribute to soil health, biodiversity, and the fight against climate change.

This training, organized by CNOP-Congo and PROPAC, addresses several challenges, including strengthening the capacities of rural leaders by providing them with the necessary knowledge and tools. It aims to make rural leaders true agents of change, capable of speaking for their communities and defending their interests. By helping them influence public policies, they have acquired advocacy skills. They can now better make their voices heard and contribute to the development of agricultural policies that are more favorable to agroecology. At the end of the training, agricultural producers are able to promote the exchange of good practices. This meeting was also an opportunity for participants to share their experiences, knowledge, and challenges, thus fostering the emergence

of synergies and collaborative projects.

Thanks to this initiative, CNOP-Congo and PROPAC have laid the foundation for a movement in favor of agroecology in Congo. The rural leaders trained in this workshop are now better equipped to support their communities in transitioning to more sustainable and resilient agriculture. The training therefore marks a significant step in the transition to agriculture that is more respectful of the environment and more socially just. It testifies to the willingness of Congolese civil society actors to build a better future for generations to come.

**Ruffin Georges TOUADI**



*Participants in the workshop*

# Immersed in agricultural innovation: A visit to the national agency for research and innovation valorization.

As a follow-up to the training on advocacy and lobbying techniques for agroecology, CNOP-Congo organized a visit to the National Agency for the Valorization of Research and Innovation Results (ANVRI) site, which was inaugurated last July and is located within the ORSTOM compound in Brazzaville.

This visit allowed training participants to gauge Congo's ambition to develop sustainable and resilient agriculture. Warmly welcomed by Mr. Patrick Obel Okeli, the agency's director, visitors were immersed in the initiatives being implemented to transform research findings into concrete solutions for Congolese farmers.

The first part of the visit took place in the experimental market garden. A true open-air laboratory, visitors observed the various cultivation techniques implemented to optimize yields and preserve biodiversity. ANVRI researchers (including students) presented local and improved varieties,



*The Director of ANVRI presenting the experimental space for vegetable plants to visitors*

research. Participants were able to see that the agency plays a central role in connecting researchers, farmers, and businesses, thus facilitating knowledge transfer and the adoption of agroecological practices.



*group portrait taken at the conclusion of the visit*

This visit was a true source of inspiration. It showed that Congo has immense potential to develop sustainable agriculture capable of feeding its population while preserving natural resources. By supporting ANVRI's initiatives and strengthening partnerships between the various actors in the agricultural sector, it is possible to contribute to building a brighter future for Congolese farmers and the entire population.



*specimen from a greenhouse trial*

crop rotation methods, and biological pest control techniques.

The tour then continued in an ultra-modern agricultural greenhouse, equipped with the latest technologies in irrigation, climate control, and plant production. This innovative infrastructure is a valuable tool for testing new varieties, developing soil-less cultivation techniques, and training farmers in best practices.

Beyond these field visits, exchanges with ANVRI teams helped to better understand the challenges of valorizing agricultural



*Mr. Nga, one of the trainers (on the far right), listening attentively to the Center Director's explanations*

Ruffin Georges TOUADI

# The new village of Nkouo, a laboratory for the exchange of experience



Exchanges between visitors and operators of the new village of Nkouo

**Nkouo Agricultural Village, located about a hundred kilometers from Brazzaville, has transformed into a true hub for exchange and experience sharing. Bringing together experienced producers and passionate learners, Nkouo has been the stage for fruitful discussions on the sidelines of the agroecology training organized by CNOP-Congo.**

Planned as a bridge to continue the agroecology training, the excursion to the new Nkouo agricultural village aimed to create a link between theory and practice. But it



A visitor proposing agroecological solutions for tomato cultivation to a farmer in the new village of Nkouo

was also about discovering the realities experienced by the residents of the new agricultural village, both in terms of their profession as agricultural producers and in terms of the structuring and life of the new village.

ting the new village concept.

A mutually enriching sharing of experiences. The exchanges were an opportunity for participants to: Discover new agroecological techniques adapted to local conditions; Share know-how and tips for more sustainable agriculture; Identify the constraints and opportunities associated with the transition to agroecology; Build a network of producers committed to a common approach.

The visitors then visited the plots of the operators of the new village, observed the different crops and exchanged about the results obtained. This step was a highlight for some to concretize the theoretical concepts discussed in training and for others to spark new ideas for better yields.

It should be noted that the concept of a



Exchanges between producers have enabled the establishment of partnerships on the use of compost adapted to market gardening crops thanks to the chicken coops of the new village

New Agricultural Village is an interesting project implemented by the Congolese Government, aimed at modernizing and developing agriculture in Congo.

The visitors, led by CNOP-Congo and their Cameroonian trainers (from PROPAC), armed with the knowledge acquired on agroecology, shared their knowledge on innovative techniques such as strip cropping, crop rotation, and compost production. For their part, the operators of the new Nkouo village brought their field experience, testifying to the successes, failures, and challenges encountered in implemen-

Thanks to these exchanges and this trip to the new village of Nkouo, the participants left motivated to implement the new practices acquired in their own farms. Nkouo thus became, for an afternoon, an inspiring model for other producers, demonstrating that it is possible to reconcile agricultural productivity and respect for the environment.

**Ruffin Georges TOUADI**

## COCBAI :

# One more step towards a more resilient Congo Basin



From left to right: Séraphin Médard Ntady, President of the Cnop-Congo, Germain Céphas Ewangui, Permanent Secretary of the Consultative Council of Civil Society Organizations and NGOs, Mme Hortense Kinkodila, Vice-President of the Cnop-Congo.

Officially launched by Mr. Germain Céphas Ewangui, Permanent Secretary of the Consultative Council of Civil Society Organizations and NGOs, the COBBAI program validation workshop, organized by CNOP-Congo, AFSA, and RENAPEC on October 1, 2024, in the conference room of the Ministry of Agriculture, marked a significant milestone in the implementation of the initiative dedicated to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and the promotion of agroecology in the Congo Basin. The over sixty participants were able to deepen their understanding of the challenges related to biodiversity conservation, adaptation to climate change, and the promotion of sustainable food systems.

Three key moments marked this day: the opening addresses, the workshop sessions, and the presentation of their findings. In his opening remarks, the President of

tions as partners of the State. Recognizing the importance of the subject at hand, he reassured the participants that he would be the spokesperson for the workshop's conclusions to the relevant political authorities.

As planned, the discussions focused on the proposals made to improve the five-year COCBAI program document. After the presentation of the program's main axes by the experts, thematic working groups were formed to make these corrections. It should be recalled that the COCBAI program focuses on: the restoration of degraded ecosystems. Participants discussed the various techniques of forest restoration and the promotion of agroforestry. The capacity building of local actors. Proposals were made to train agricultural producers in agroecological techniques. The development of partnerships. Participants identified key stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the program and defined the modalities of collaboration.



One of the experts (standing) accompanying a working group during the workshop

CNOP-Congo, Séraphin Médard Ntady, briefly sensitized the audience on the expected results of this workshop. For him, this was an opportunity for participants to validate the position paper of the five-year program on the "Initiative for Biodiversity, Climate and Agroecology in the Congo Basin (COCBAI)", and to integrate proposals that could make it evolve.

Monitoring and evaluation of results: Performance indicators were defined to measure the short-term and long-term impact of the program on the ground.

In conclusion, this workshop strengthened the sense of belonging to a common project and mobilized energies to meet the challenges facing the Congo Basin.

In opening the proceedings, Mr. Germain Céphas Ewangui, for his part, once again praised the role of civil society organiza-

**Ruffin Georges TOUADI**



Une vue de la salle

# The Congo Basin's biodiversity is a global concern

*The Congo Basin, the second largest tropical rainforest in the world after the Amazon, spans six Central African countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. This vast expanse of forest, rich in exceptional biodiversity, plays a crucial role in regulating the global climate.*

Unfortunately, this natural wealth is threatened by numerous human activities. Deforestation, mining, poaching, climate change, and more are taking a toll. The expansion of agriculture, illegal logging, and bushfires are causing massive destruction of forests. The exploitation of mineral resources, particularly hydrocarbons, has negative impacts on ecosystems and local populations. Wildlife, especially large mammals, is the victim of poaching for their meat or byproducts. Global warming is disrupting natural cycles and threatening the survival of many species.

In the face of these threats, numerous initiatives like COBCAI are being implemented to preserve the biodiversity of the Congo Basin. These include the creation of protected areas. National parks, biosphere reserves, and other types of protected areas are being established to protect the most fragile ecosystems. Reforestation and restoration of degraded ecosystems. Reforestation projects are being implemented to restore forests and natural habitats. Promotion of agroforestry and sustainable agriculture. These practices allow for the reconciliation of agricultural production and biodiversity conservation.

The fight against illegal logging. Measures are being taken to strengthen forest surveillance and combat illegal activities. Awareness-raising and education of local populations. Environmental education programs are being implemented to raise awareness among populations



about the importance of biodiversity conservation. Partnerships between governments, NGOs, and local communities. These partnerships make it possible to implement conservation actions on a large scale.

Despite all these efforts, many challenges remain: lack of financial resources, corruption, and armed conflict. Indeed, conservation projects require significant investments. And according to some specialists in the field, corruption often hinders the implementation of conservation policies. Moreover, armed conflicts destabilize certain regions of the Congo Basin and hinder conservation efforts.

The preservation of the biodiversity of the Congo Basin is a global challenge. This forest plays a crucial role in regulating the climate and is home to unique biodiversity. It is therefore essential to continue and intensify

conservation efforts to ensure the sustainability of this exceptional ecosystem. This is the path that CNOP-Congo, AFSA, and RENAPEC want to take, to contribute to "saving the planet".

**Ruffin Georges TOUADI**



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